Action for Excellence

INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: July 20, 1988

TO: College Relations Committee

FROM: J. Bryant VanCronkhite

SUBJECT: Backgrounder for Meeting on July 25, 1988

Information found in this backgrounder will give you a better understanding of how MSOE's radio station has matured, where it is positioned currently, and how we are looking at our goals and objectives for the years to come.

As in other matters of business, we should assume that nothing remains static; one either moves forward or backward. While we must acknowledge on one hand that we have a substantial audience albeit a limited listening range, we must not accept our success as a reason to simply hold our ground. Without constant review of objectives; strategies, and marketing, we are not closing the Loop of Success. Consequently, at the July 25 meeting, it would be most helpful for the College Relations Committee to review the current operations and discuss creative ideas for improving upon these operations to increase our audience share and benefits to the college.

In addition to about 15 college staff and faculty members who will act as resources, we will have the benefit of counsel from Steve Smith, president of WTMJ; Paul Roller, executive vice president, Miller Brands; and Michael Zahn, Milwaukee Journal entertainment editor.

Thanks for joining us on Monday.

History of WMSE FM Radio

The roots of radio at the Milwaukee School of Engineering date back to 1903, the year the college was founded, and only six years after Marconi took out patents for his system of wireless telegraphy.

In that first year, students built crystal sets that received messages from virtually every part of the country. The strength of those receivers was augmented by a Marconi wireless station installed near the college, its antenna linking two tall chimneys of the Pabst Brewery.

In 1911, students involved in the miracle of wireless operation built a remote controlled 25-foot model zeppelin and flew it around the city's auditorium.

In 1918, the college owned and operated a complete spark sending and receiving station. MSOE put Milwaukee's first station, WIAO, on the air for its initial broadcast on September 22, 1922. Transmission was made on a wavelength of 360 meters (833.3 KHz) with 100 watts power.

WIAO became WSOE on July 7, 1925. Many national figures took part in the programs, gaining national attention for WMSE. Among those attending the event were Colonel Charles Lindberg, Lieutenant Maitland, Vice President Dawes, and President Herbert Hoover.

Programming satisfied varied tastes. Monday evening was devoted to popular music; Tuesday was for classical tastes; Wednesday evenings featured talks by college faculty members and other prominent engineers; Thursday centered around popular ballads and "old fashion" music; Friday was an evening of diversification; Saturday was the day for week-end review; and Sunday was reserved for broadcasts of services from Milwaukee churches.

The college began operation of a radio station owned by the Wisconsin News, a Milwaukee daily newspaper, on July 30, 1924. Started as a part-time operation, programming became full time a year later. In June 1927, power was boosted to 500 watts and the frequency was set at 1100 KHz. The call letters were changed to WISN in January 1928. In November 1928, the FCC assigned WISN a frequency of 1120 KHz at 250 watts power. The station also was ordered to share time with WHAD, Marquette University's transmitter. WISN operated 6/7th of the time; WHAD operated the remaining time.

Federal law forbade educational institutions from commercializing on radio and the college divested its interest in WISN in the late 1920s.

In the meantime (1924), MSOE student members of the Radio Club developed and obtained a license for an amateur station, W9SO. The letters subsequently were changed to W9HHX, and the station is operated today under that listing.

In August 1960, MSOE and WISN combined efforts to present Milwaukee with a program called "Sounds of Silence." Broadcast weekly, the program featured college staff and faculty members discussing matters relating to their expertise.

WSOE signed on the air on March 15, 1969 as a student operation of the college. The station was a carrier current AM station that broadcast to the campus dormitories. WSOE shut down in May 1979 in order to permit construction of new studios in the new Margaret Loock Residence Hall. In October of that year, Everett "Jerry" Cobb donated $30,000 to the radio station. Alumnus Cobb had worked on WSOE, WISN, WTMJ, and later owned a station in Reno, Nevada.

The station changed its call letters to WMSE in 1981 and began operation on the FM band, using Everett Cobb's donation as the catalyst for change. The station now operates at 91.7 MHz at a rated power of 1000 watts. The station manager is Bob Betts.

MSOE

MILWAUKEE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

The College of Engineering, Management and Engineering Technology

TO: WMSE Radio Broadcasters Club
Dean Patrick J. Coffey, General Manager
Prof. Thomas W. Davis, Faculty Advisor
Prof. Emil F. Symonik, Faculty Advisor

FROM: Dr. Robert R. Spitzer, President RR Spitzer

DATE: March 31, 1981

SUBJECT: WMSE Guidelines of Operation

On behalf of the Board of Regents and Officers of the College, I am truly pleased that the Milwaukee School of Engineering has been granted the resources and license to operate our new campus radio station. To all who have given so much of themselves to bring us to this point, my real thanks and appreciation.

This powerful new communications tool is a valuable asset to our College. WMSE represents a true alternative to commercial radio, and the unique format of the programs affords the station an opportunity to provide a true service to the MSOE community and the entire Greater Milwaukee area. I see it as the challenge and the eventual goal of the Radio Broadcasters Club to develop a variety of programming which will accommodate a wide range of interests and needs in the larger community, so that WMSE Radio may truly meet its obligations as a public trustee.

At the same time, however, let us acknowledge that this is a new venture for the School, and it is important, right here at the outset, to have in place some assurances that the School will continue its reputation for educational excellence by maintaining the highest standards in this its newest endeavor.

In that regard, I believe it must be clearly understood that the station, and the license to operate it, are the property not of the Radio Club, but of the total institution; and further, that our continued existence and progress as a college depend upon a total "team" effort by students, faculty, staff, and alumni. I appreciate and applaud the fact that WMSE's Executive Board is presently undertaking a review and refinement of the station's operating policies and procedures; I trust that the Board will make extensive use of the personal and professional resources at hand in their advisors and the entire MSOE team as they continue this most necessary and worthwhile task of review and revision.

In the meantime, however, I am attaching a set of guidelines which have been developed and endorsed by the Officers of our institution as necessary to help contain and properly direct the activity of the new radio station as a public communications tool. I concur with their judgment that these guidelines must be effective immediately and communicated to every member of the Club so that, in WMSE, we display to the community the professional image of the College that has taken 78 years to build.

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In reviewing these guidelines, I truly believe that they need not restrict programming creativity or innovation. I believe, instead, that they are matters of responsible judgment, fundamental propriety, and basic good sense, which support the basic philosophy incorporated in the FCC regulations. And I agree with the other officers that it is important at this time to spell them out rather than take them for granted.

To conclude: the Administration in no way wishes to "take away" or "take over" WMSE from our students past and present who have worked mightily to make it a reality; we have little interest in a campus radio station here that is not student-operated. On the other hand, the College cannot and will not be satisfied with anything less than the best leadership and direction that our students are most capable of giving to this new enterprise. As all of us work together toward that end, be assured of my own personal best wishes and the continuing strong support of my office, my fellow Officers, and our Board of Regents.

RSS/sm

Real thanks for
your cooperation and
for your leadership
Robert R Lyle

Mission Statement - WMSE

1. To provide a community service in the Milwaukee area, and to serve the public interests through public service announcements and programs.

2. To provide an educational experience for MSOE students, alumni, faculty, staff, and selected community volunteers who wish to participate in the operation of an FM radio station.

3. To provide studios, equipment, and expertise for MSOE in the production of promotions, including public service announcements.

4. To enhance the image of MSOE in the community through verbal and musical presentations that reflect the philosophy of the college.

5. To experiment with and provide alternative programming that is not served by other Milwaukee-area radio stations.

Short-Term Objectives - WMSE

Short-term objectives are to be accomplished by June 30, 1989.

1. Develop program(s) to assist the Admission Department attract listeners to MSOE.

2. Develop program(s) to assist the Development Department attract listeners to MSOE.

3. Upgrade programming of the station to attract the widest possible audience, with specific but not exclusive attention to those who might pass through the MSOE campus.

4. Develop program(s) to attract MSOE students into participating in station activities.

5. Develop program(s) to increase audience of MSOE students.

6. Develop marketing program(s) to increase publicity about WMSE which will bring the station to the attention of a broader audience.

7. Develop promotion package to increase corporate underwriting by individuals and small businesses, not in conflict with commercial stations.

8. Develop training program(s) for incoming volunteer station personnel and in-service training for current personnel.

Long-Term Goals - WMSE

Long-term goals are to be developed on a continuing basis for review and modification in June 1990 (and every two years thereafter) for accomplishment and practicality.

1. Increase power of transmitter to reach a wider audience beyond Milwaukee County.

2. Develop and execute continuing surveys to determine WMSE audience with more accuracy.

3. Improve station facilities to allow more extensive programming capability.

4. Determine community impact of station and needed actions to increase community involvement and interest.

Strategies - WMSE

1. Determine programming of interest to community and review practicality of implementing programming.

2. Determine programming of interest to high school students and review practicality of implementing programming.

3. Determine programming of interest to college students and review practicality of implementing programming.

4. Determine programming of interest to college benefactors and review practicality of implementing programming.

5. Market sale of WMSE and MSOE bumper stickers, WMSE T-shirts, and other promotional devices.

6. Hold regularly scheduled meetings with Admission and Development personnel to review potential assistance from WMSE.

7. Hold recruiting sessions to attract MSOE students into station.

8. Maintain flexibility in programming to be able to react to community and college needs.

9. Survey student body annually to determine interest in station and what station may do to increase audience.

Code of Conduct - WMSE

All WMSE personnel must conform to the following code of conduct. Any personnel failing to comply with any aspect of the code will be subject to immediate discipline, including dismissal from the station, at the sole discretion of the station manager.

1. Music played over the air must be of high quality and include:

   a. No songs whose lyrics include reference to satanic worship, anti-religious themes, any criminal act, or obscene words;

   b. No songs that imply such actions as listed in #1a above without specific mention;

   c. No songs that have ostensibly anti-drug lyrics but could be interpreted as condoning drug abuse.

2. On-air dialog must be of high caliber with no reference to matters discussed in #1a above, and with no sound effects that could be interpreted as rude or obnoxious.

3. News and sports broadcasts must contain no editorial commentary by the reader.

4. Public service announcements must be read "as is" without additional comments by the reader.

5. WMSE records, tapes, compact discs, or equipment may not be taken from the station without written approval of the general manager.

6. Graffiti may not be placed on station property or facilities.

7. Theft or removal of station or personnel property without the approval of the owner is forbidden.

8. Telephone courtesy is mandatory; callers must be treated with respect regardless of their manners.

9. On-air personnel may not comment on political matters of any nature.

10. Political candidates and politicians may be given air time only with the written approval of the general manager.

11. All personnel are to cooperate fully with MSOE Security officers in the event of a declared emergency situation.

WMSE Format Determination

Robert Betts, Station Manager

When WMSE started in 1981, the MSOE Radio Club ran the operation in a free-form format without block programming.

My predecessor, Doug Geren, set up the current format of block programming so that listeners could time their listening according to their tastes four nights each week:

9 a.m.	- noon	Jazz and fusion
12 noon	- 3 p.m.	Soul and funk
9 p.m.	- midnight	Heavy metal

The remaining time was for alternative rock music. Big band nostalgia shows were aired on Sunday from 9 a.m. until noon, Latino shows from noon until 3 p.m., Italian shows from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m., classics from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. (since changed to 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.), folk music from 8:30 - 10:30, Milwaukee Talking until 11:00 p.m., and Women's Music Radio from 11:00 p.m. until midnight.

I would assume -- and agree -- that the reason for the so-called "alternative music" scheme was to program the station with music that was not, and is not now heard on other stations in the market. In other words, do not duplicate other stations' programming, stations that have more funds to spend on talent, promotion, and advertising.

The concept also provides an outlet for not-top-hit music, imported music, music tracks that are not heard elsewhere, and a plethora of local artists who have a difficult time getting their music on the play lists of the commercial stations.

One of the local groups that got its first heavy air play on WMSE was the Violent Femmes, which is now a top national group.

The alternative rock music concept also fits in beautifully with the desire to attain a substantial audience in the 18-34 year-old demographic that is expanding each year into a higher age bracket as listeners mature. The 18-34 demographic corresponds to MSOE's target audience for college-age and continuing education students.

Contemplating Format Changes

What if WMSE changed its format to fit an older demographic -- say 45+ -- in an attempt to attract older, more established listeners who might become college benefactors? First, WMSE would buck WOKY, WEZW, WTMJ, WISN and similar stations that spend twice as much for their morning drive-time d.j.'s as WMSE spends totally for the year.

These commercial stations have greater financial resources to promote their stations, using high-priced giveaways during rating periods, strong signals that blanket southeast Wisconsin night and day, and money to hire high-cost talent.

If WMSE tries to buck such commercial operations with a low-power signal, our efforts would be futile. We would have to secure older volunteer d.j.'s who would play that type of music -- or hire them -- since MSOE students would not volunteer to play such music.

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What if WMSE changed to all-classical music? That type of audience would naturally draw some 45+ listeners who might benefit the college, but the station would be bucking WFMR and WHAD for audience -- stations that have professional music hosts and vast libraries of classical music accumulated at great expense.

For WMSE to shift to a classical format, we would have to hire classical d.j.'s at great expense since MSOE students do not volunteer to play classical music. The format shift also would result in a ratings disaster because of WMSE's low power and range. The 18-34 demographic also would disappear, particularly as WFMR continues to strengthen its signal in the downtown and East Side areas.

Other Formats

Country and Western Music. Currently dominated by WMIL-FM. It is doubtful that the college wants to associate itself with this format.

Talk Radio. Currently dominated by WTMJ, WISN and, apparently WUWM. This format is expensive to operate, requiring high-price talent and resources generally not available to MSOE.

New Age Music Radio. Currently being broadcast by a Racine station that beams into Milwaukee with little ratings success so far. New Age music radio is the latest in radio for stations striving to get a small piece of the market. It would be difficult to get volunteers to man any full-time broadcast schedule, and WMSE would be competing with another station that is spending money to promote itself in Milwaukee.

Conclusion

Changing to a classical or "music of your life" format would require an expensive operation that probably would not succeed because of commercial competition in Milwaukee. WMSE's alternative rock format fits exactly the student age -- and rapidly is becoming the parent age -- demographic that MSOE is seeking at the student level. WMSE has been very successful in the past seven years and, despite some recent problems with heavy metal music, it can continue to grow and prosper and assist MSOE in its mission. In comparison with WUWM and WYMS, both of which are supported with tax dollars, WMSE is a tremendous bargain for MSOE.

Miscellaneous Information - WMSE

Public Service Announcements. About 17,500 public service announcements are aired annually over WMSE on behalf of the college and other community organizations.

Milwaukee Talking. This program is aired September through May for 30 minutes on Sunday evening. It features interviews with MSOE faculty and staff, and other guests. Also covered are discussion series supplied by Lutheran and Catholic groups that review suicide, drug abuse, alcohol dependence, family life, and other aspects of life.

What's New. A Sunday evening feature of interviews with MSOE faculty and staff on topics pertaining to their expertise, such as engineering, aerospace, educational opportunities.

Daily Shows

Earthwatch - featuring programs on the environment.

Mother Earth News - featuring programs on gardening, home care, the environment, tips on aspects of everyday life.

The Word - an inspirational series featuring show business personalities who offer guidance on living a better life.

Second Thoughts - an inspirational series.

Alive and Well - focuses on physical and mental health. Recorded at WMSE by Joe Meloy and July Moncrief (counseling services). Listeners are encouraged to write to MSOE for additional scripts and information

Weekend Show

Info Radio - one-minute summaries of magazine articles.

Periodic Airing

Speeches. Speeches of, or interviews with prominent visitors to the campus, are broken into one-minute segments for sporadic airing during the broadcast day.

Sports. A number of WMSE Raider basketball games are broadcast.

Festivals. Remote broadcasts are aired of Festa Italiana and the United Community Center (Latino) block party.

Minorities. An annual three-hour program emphasizes opportunities for engineering education of minorities.

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Promotions

WMSE T-shirt bearing the letters "WMSE" and "Milwaukee School of Engineering, are sold at three record stores in the area, as well as two record store chains, and in the MSOE bookstore.

Miscellaneous

WMSE assists students by recording audio segments of school projects.

WMSE studios and talent are used to record MSOE commercials.

WMSE personnel become involved in community projects:
.General Manager Bob Betts is an auctioneer on Channel 10/36's television auction each year.
.A disc jockey provides a program several times each year for handicapped children in the Milwaukee School System.
.General Manager Betts represents MSOE at many community events.

WMSE prepares tape recorded music for special MSOE events.

WMSE General Manager Bob Betts delivers presentations to student groups during the year.

WMSE records music for community organizations as time permits.

WMSE's softball team annually plays in the Lung Association Softball marathon to raise money for the Association.

WMSE hosts tours of its facilities by school groups.

WMSE supplies voice talent and recording of videotape audio for the Society of Automotive Engineers mini-Baja events and national conventions.

WMSE MUSICAL FORMAT SCHEDULE

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY	
Midnight-6 a.m.	Alternative rock
6-9 a.m.	Rock, interviews
9-Noon	Jazz, fusion jazz, blues
Noon-3 p.m.	Soul and funk
3 p.m.-Midnight	Alternative rock

SATURDAYS	
Midnight-9 a.m.	Alternative rock
9 a.m.-Noon	Jazz, fusion jazz and blues
Noon-3 p.m.	Soul and funk
3-6 p.m.	Alternative rock
6-9 p.m.	New age jazz
9-Midnight	Alternative rock

SUNDAYS	
Midnight-9 a.m.	Alternative rock
9 a.m.-Noon	Nostalgia big band show
Noon-3 p.m.	Orgullo Latino (Latino music)
3-6 p.m.	Voice of Italy (Italian music)
6-8:30 p.m.	Classics
8:30-10:30 p.m.	Folk music
10:30-11:00 p.m.	Milwaukee Talking (talk show)
11:00 p.m.-Midnight	Women's Music Radio (folk music)

SURVEY OF EVENING STUDENTS REGARDING RADIO PREFERENCE

When asked "What radio station do you usually listen to?" on a May, 1988 survey of MSOE evening college students, respondents answered:

WKLH -- 86 (Classic Rock Hits)
WQFM -- 67 (Adult Rock)
WKTI -- 66 (Top 40, Contemporary Rock Hits)
WLZR -- 44 (Album Rock)
WTMJ -- 38 (General Adult Programming, flagship station of Brewers, Bucks, Packers)
WBZN -- 18 (Adult Contemporary)
WLTQ -- 13 (Adult Contemporary)

WMSE -- 11

WMYX -- 11 (Adult Contemporary)
WISN -- 8 (Talk)
WMIL -- 8 (Country)
WFMR -- 7 (Classical)
WEMP -- 7 (Oldies)
WLIP -- 6 (Adult Contemporary) - Kenosha
WLUM -- 5 (Urban Contemporary)
WUWM -- 5 (News, classics, and jazz)
WEZW -- 3 (Easy Listening)
WHAD -- 3 (Wisconsin Public Radio - news, information, public affairs)
WJZQ -- 2 (Top 40) - Kenosha
WVCY -- 2 (Inspirational, Christian public affairs and news)

11 other stations with one each - 61 did not respond

NOTE: **Average age of MSOE evening college students is 28.**

This is somewhat consistent with Birch Ratings ranking for stations according to the 25-49 adult demographic (Monday-Sunday, 6 am-midnight):

	Quarter Hour Share	
WKLH	13.6	
WKTI	12.6	
WLUM	8.2	
WMIL	7.7	
WMYX	7.4	
WTMJ	6.8	(perhaps largely due to sports programming)
WLZR	5.2	
WLTQ	4.6	
WEMP	3.7	
WQFM	3.3	
WBZN	2.8	
WISN	2.3	
WOKY	2.2	
WZTR	2.1	
WFMR	1.7	
WUWM	1.4	
WMVP	1.4	
WNOV	.7	
WVCY	.7	
WEZW	.6	
WMSE	.3	
WTKM	.1	

Summary

In the fall of 1987, the college was visited by a young man in his early 20s who declined to identify himself but who demanded that we remove all heavy metal and rock music from WMSE. He played certain music selections he claimed were recorded from our station.

When it was verified (that same week) that some disk jockeys were playing music considered objectionable by the station manager and director of college relations, all heavy music was banned pending an investigation of lyrics within that segment of entertainment. Within one month, certain rock music containing objectionable lyrics also was banned and two disk jockeys were relieved of their positions for continuing to play objectionable music.

The young man, who had subsequently been identified, restated his mission of having us remove all rock and heavy metal music. He contacted certain college regents, underwriters, and the FCC in order to accomplish his mission. He also played the original tapes for his parish priest in Elm Grove, neglecting to tell the priest that WMSE no long was playing heavy metal music. The priest took offense and published a notice in his parish bulletin condemning the station and asking parishioners to write to Dr. Spitzer -- which they did.

The situation was corrected with a telephone call and follow-up letter to the priest from the director of college relations.

No further activity has been observed from the young man.

Bob Betts